

Cordelia Harvey

Cordelia Harvey was from Kenosha, where her father's family were prominent officials throughout the 1840's. There she taught school and married fellow schoolteacher Louis Harvey. In 1859, Louis was elected Secretary of State and the couple moved to Madison. Soon after, in 1861, Mr. Harvey was elected Governor of Wisconsin.

As Wisconsin troops were called away to the Civil War, Mrs. Harvey became an ardent worker for soldiers and their families. Following the tragic drowning death of her husband in 1862, Cordelia believed that she must continue to help the war relief cause. She fulfilled this mission through her appointment as Sanitary Agent for Wisconsin, stationed temporarily at St. Louis, Missouri, tending to Wisconsin soldiers. Because of the care she rendered many soldiers began to call her the "Wisconsin Angel." In 1864, Mrs. Harvey obtained permission from Abraham Lincoln to establish a hospital in Wisconsin for convalescing soldiers.

Cordelia Harvey had a love for children, which inspired her to bring 6 or 7 war orphans from the south back to Wisconsin with her. Soon after, she established the Soldiers Orphans Home in Madison, which existed until 1874.

(Adapted from the Wisconsin Electronic Reader at www.library.wisc.edu/WI Reader)